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# THE TYPHUS TRAIN

BY RILEY ALLEN

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## Telegram

*"Nikolsk, Siberia, August 27—To the American Red Cross, Vladivostok; There is a train of 30 Russian box cars with 150 sick Russian soldiers at Nikolsk from Perm. Have been on the road since May 10 and at Nikolsk four days. There are 44 cases of spotted fever, 85 cases of typhus and two cases of dysentery. There are four nurses, two of whom are sick. Two doctors were in charge of train, one of whom died at Razdolnoe yesterday of cholera. No medicines, clothing or linen. Can you do anything to assist in taking care of these people promptly? (Signed) Major Blunt."*

## I.

The train stood on a siding of the Trans-Siberian Railroad—a long train of little Russian box cars, faded red in color. They were on the track farthest from the tiny station. Under the flaming sun of an August morning, the sand and cinder of the railroad yard gave up an intense heat; it was as if the train stood upon a red-hot stove; and over the yard danced and shimmered torrid waves in which the green of Siberia's summer foliage was burning to lifeless brown. The line of track ran north and south in a broad valley, threaded by brooks, dotted with the homes of peasants, with carts moving slowly along roads, and with cattle, goats and sheep grazing in the fields. Now and then some small village showed its cluster of huts. And as over the railroad yard, so over the whole countryside hung the mantle of suffocating heat. From 7 in the morning the temperature climbed steadily; by noon it was near a hundred in the meager shade of the box-cars—a shade that afforded an appearance of relief as elusive and cruelly deceitful as a mirage on the blazing desert.

The train had pulled slowly into the siding from the

north at dawn of that August morning. The wheezing little engine detached itself and puffed away, leaving the long string of box-cars motionless. Before the engine was off the siding, from the half-open sliding doors of the cars figures began to creep and crawl, and presently some of these figures got themselves slowly and awkwardly down to the ground. In ten minutes, up and down the tracks, around the boxes on wheels, there were fifty or seventy-five men. They lay or sat upon the sand and cinders, or crawled on hands and knees, or, half-upright, staggered about as aimlessly as if they were blind men blundering eternally into unseen obstacles. Some of them fell, and lay immobile, and the rising sun set its slanting rays upon their prostrate figures. Those slanting rays searched out the dark interiors of the box-cars, too, and fell upon men supine at the doors. Their hands sometimes dangled over the sills, the arms limp; and hands and arms were shriveled to knots and bones over which the meager, dry skin stretched taut; stiff and fleshless as the claws of birds.

Further back, in the still-dusky interiors, other men were sprawled upon the rough flooring as if they had fallen there—and indeed, some of them had fallen. There were still other men on rude bunks of planking; two tiers of bunks on each side of the doors; over the planking a thin covering of straw. Some men had crept far back into corners, and lay with knees drawn up, limbs and body a-huddle. Some lay with arms outflung, faces to the roof. Some were clothed in the rags of gray overcoats, dingy gray uniforms, or tattered undergarments. Some were clothed in the remnants of blankets.

The sun rose higher and higher; the heat grew steadily; and soon after dawn clouds of flies which had dotted the walls during the dark hours appeared in ceaseless, buzzing activity. They swarmed thick and black as swarms of bees, settling upon the men, crawling upon hands and faces and upon clothing, crawling over the floors and walls; upon the ground outside. The air around the train was dotted with them like flights of midgets. Persistent, voracious and innumerable, they gathered about the train until their buzzing was audible a dozen yards from the track. Some of the men fought feebly against these myriad pests; upon others they settled and crawled unmolested.

As the light grew, a close observer could have seen upon

the men and their clothing and upon blankets, bunks and floors, other things more unclean than the flies. The cars swarmed with vermin; the gray lice gathered in patches as large as the palm of the hand upon the lean frames of the men; colonized in their long, unkempt hair. As some of the soldiers fought weakly with the flies, so did they fight with the lice; searching dully in their clothing, or scratching themselves with their shriveled, grimy fingers. Many of those who lay or sat upon the ground kept up this scratching hour after hour, tormented by a ceaseless itch, until their scraping of the abraded skin with broken fingernails was a gesture automatic and hopeless.

There were fourteen of these cars from which men slowly emerged to wander about the train or cluster in listless groups close by. Twenty-seven cars constituted the string; one of these was a small and dilapidated passenger-coach.

A few of the men, gathering twigs and rubbish, built tiny fires, and over the fires placed tin-cans, or small pannikins. Now and then one had a kettle. They brought from wrappings of foul rags bits of moldy bread, or decaying meat; and they began to cook in their inadequate vessels.

Four men, apparently somewhat stronger than the others, but in rags scarcely less filthy, appeared from the passenger-coach and went to one of the box-cars. Two clambered inside, the others waited. The two who had gone in presently brought to the doorway a long, limp bundle wound in a gray overcoat, and then the four carried this bundle to a car which had been closed, its sliding door close shut. They opened the sliding-door and heaved the bundle inside, where it lay with five others.

The men in the cars and on the ground paid no heed to the little procession or to what the four carried. They went on with their various tasks of cooking, scratching and fighting the flies. Some of them who had been sitting, fell forward to the sand. One man dropped as he stood in the doorway of a car—dropped four feet to the ground—and lay twitching.

The heat grew; the flies increased; the vermin incessantly tormented the men in rags; and the train sent forth an intolerable smell of putridity. The air was tainted with it; a mantle of contamination hung over the long line of

box-cars; there was grim menace in the stench of corruption that radiated from cars and flies and vermin and men.

## II.

We found the Train of Horror on the lonely siding at mid-morning of that sweltering August day when we came up from the south—four of us with our two Red Cross cars coupled to a freight. The cars were loaded with blankets, sheets, underwear, towels and medicines. At noon the day before, an American railroad man—one of that fine corps which went to Siberia to tackle the job of rehabilitating a shattered railway system—telephoned from Nikolsk, 105 versts north, to his office in Vladivostok, sending the message which leads this story. The two cars were loaded that afternoon, they went north that night. The typhus train in Nikolsk went south, headed toward Vladivostok, and on the Razdolnoe siding we saw it and its burden of dying men.

## III.

On May 10 this train—called a Russian sanitary train—had started from Perm with soldiers who had been fighting on the Ural front against the Bolsheviks. The soldiers were ill with spotted typhus fever, relapsing or recurrent fever and dysentery; and some had not recovered from wounds. The chief doctor of the train left Perm with orders to place the soldiers in a hospital at Omsk, 500 miles away. At Omsk every hospital overflowed with sick and wounded. He was ordered on. He reached the next city, and was ordered on; the next, and still could find no room; and again was ordered on.

This chief doctor died of cholera. His assistant, broken with overwork, discouragement and inability to relieve his suffering charges, could give us, at Razdolnoe, only the outlines of this story of their long and terrible passage from the Urals to Vladivostok. The train—nothing but a freight in physical make-up—crept from station to station across Siberia. It crept across Za-Baikal, and across Manchuria, and into the Maritime Provinces—and then down toward Vladivostok.

Wounds, fever, famine and failure of all medical and hospital supplies transformed the train of help into a train of pestilence. More than fifty died along the way; and of those who reached Razdolnoe most would die unless relief

came speedily. From the first their food had been insufficient; latterly they were travelling through a country largely inundated with countless refugees from western Siberia, who, fleeing before the Bolsheviks, had scraped the station-towns bare of food supplies. The train manager was furnished with a small amount of Siberian or Kolchak government money. This is not current in Manchuria, and in Manchuria the sick men starved. There is no doubt that some of the deaths were from starvation quite as much as disease. And it was a train of starving as well as fevered men we saw that morning at Razdolnoe.

They had waited for help four days in Nikolsk. None came. The Nikolsk hospitals were filled, there was report of a Russian barracks near Razdolnoe which might be used, and so once again the box-cars were hitched to an engine, and the train moved forward on the long road of death.

At Perm, in European Russia, May 10; at Razdolnoe, on the Pacific Coast of Siberia, August 28. Between those dates a grim, endless stretch of suffering, disappointment and despair. The distance is greater than from New York to San Francisco and back to Chicago, and those soldiers had traversed it in box-cars where they lay on boards; had traversed it while stricken with a deadly fever which burns the flesh from the bones and brings tortures of pain; they had traversed it in a torrid summer whose tropic heat is almost as extreme as the Arctic cold of the Siberian winter.

More than fifty dead—that is the least surprising of these facts. The surprising thing is that any survived to crawl and totter about the box-cars, and, as we approached them, to stretch out to us hands skinny as claws and implore us mutely for food to gulp into their shrunken bellies.

Two days later we were back at Razdolnoe from Nikolsk. We had searched Nikolsk for quarters for the soldiers, and had found none. We had meanwhile relieved temporarily the most pressing needs of those aboard the train. And this time we came back to clean up the train and its patients while waiting for Russian military, medical and civil officials in Vladivostok, Nikolsk, and Razdolnoe to settle the question of where the train should discharge its human pestilence. Five died while the train waited; three died on the day when we arrived for the second time.

## IV.

The following is from the writer's diary for that day, August 30:

"To-day, between 11 and 7:30, we cleaned the train, bathed every sick soldier, five *sanitars*, some other attendants; gave them new bedding of sweet smelling hay, blankets and other supplies; got 115 pounds of beef from the American Army post here—enough for two fine, big meals and several helpings of wholesome soup—cleaned up the Razdolnoe station yard where the train has stood since Thursday morning, and to-night, after burying eight dead, we are on the way to Spasskoe, orders having come through from the Supreme Russian General at Vladivostok ordering the train to Spasskoe, where the 20th Military Hospital (Russian) was to take them in. The end of our search for quarters is here, and though we anticipate some difficulty in putting our soldiers into the hospital, because we doubt if it is ready for them, still they have been given emergency relief, and we are confident that the rapid wasting by death has been checked.

"We came down from Nikolsk last night—or rather this morning, between two and four o'clock—to clean up the train and its patients and keep them clean until hospital space should be found. It was still dark when the engine from Nikolsk dropped our two cars on the siding, and we, who had been sleeping in our clothes, got up and saw that the cars were placed on the same track as the train from Perm.

"The typhus train loomed dimly, a long line of black against the dun of the yard. In two cars faint lights burned. One of those cars has sick nurses, women who have worked themselves almost to death, the other has *sanitars*, or attendants, in no better shape. The wheezy engine puffed off, back toward Nikolsk, and Razdolnoe yard was deserted, and quiet except for the moans which came incessantly from the shadowy cars, moans that now and then rose to screams or broken, animal whines. In those cars fevered and starving men were dragging out another night of misery. In those cars some were giving up the fight, others on the verge of surrender. As we looked, from one or another of the cars emerged vague blurs—men slowly and painfully crawling from the half-open doors to the ground, and we saw a few of them wandering about. Perhaps in

these cars the wearied *sanitars* were asleep, and fevered soldiers had escaped to stagger aimlessly about the yard, or lie down on the rails. Presently the *sanitars* emerged, found their men, and drove or carried them back into the stinking boxes.

"We slept again in our clothes, and then, after a hasty breakfast, set to work. The sick men were just beginning to stir. There was no reason for them to stir—at dawn or any other time. They had nothing in particular to do—nothing but to suffer. They had no breakfast in prospect but some moldy or decayed green bread, tea weak as water, soup with barely a hint in it of half-rotten meat, or sausage offensive to the smell as garbage. They had nothing in prospect but another day of heat, dust, flies, running sores, weakness, pain, despair.

"Why should they crawl from their soiled, evil-smelling rags, thinly covering greasy boards—crawl down to lie on the floors, or on the ground, or to hobble and stagger up and down the narrow lanes of rails?

"Yet a little later they did begin to crawl out, slowly as dying animals from their dens. They began to come out with their battered cups and tin-cans and pails, their nauseous food wrapped in more nauseous swaddlings, and some tottered down the embankment and into the tall, lush grass, seeking to find food. I saw them pulling up roots of great weeds, and gnawing these roots. I saw some of them fall in the green growths, and rise after a while to begin anew their search . . .

"And these men this morning were clinging still to their frail mortality, their mortality which at any moment might be taken from them by the inexorable hand of the evil Death which has haunted their train since it left Perm. They struggled, and fought, and clutched and clung as if life to them were sweet and dear and cast in pleasant places, instead of in places of infinite pain and want.

## V.

"We went back to our cars and ravished our food-stock for bread and such canned goods as would be immediately useful. We had done so before, but our own stock is just enough for the trip. Expecting to find hospital space at Nikolsk immediately, our train was loaded with blankets, underwear, etc. to be given the patients after they were



cleaned in the hospital baths and placed in the hospital beds. The job we are now facing is one we did not prepare for—one we could not foresee. Otherwise, we should have brought quite as much food as clothing.

"We gathered up all the food we could spare, shared rations with the less fortunate, and because there was not nearly enough to go around and because we could not take the responsibility of saying who of these hungering men should be fed from this scanty store, I gave the food to the cook-car with strict instructions to feed from it those starving most acutely.

"All of the doctors, nurses and attendants on the car were still asleep, so we went to the station master—the *natchalnik stancia*—told him we were going to clean up the train while others settled the conflict regarding its disposition, and that we wanted his help. We said we proposed to clean it with what facilities we had and what we could devise there in the bare station yard, and that we would start it at once. I will say for this *natchalnik stancia* that he is one of the liveliest Russians I have known. He would do credit to any nationality. A big, smiling, rather fleshy chap with a red face and long, flowing mustaches; clad in a white jacket and railway man's cap and huge, ample trousers, he looms up in my memories of these last few days like the genial sun breaking through on a stormy day.

"With the *natchalnik stancia* we went out to the yard to lay plans and mark the field of battle. We had just started when the telephone in his office rang. It was a long-distance call for the *natchalnik stancia*, and he had word from Vladivostok that the Supreme General there ordered the train to proceed immediately to Spasskoe.

"This order was final, definite, imperative; it could not be disobeyed. But there was no engine in the yard, and we told the station master that while the engine was coming down from Nikolsk we would begin cleaning the train. It would have been murder for the train to be kicked up and down the line for another week uncleansed and with the wants of the men unrelieved, and we knew that if ever we should start the process of cleaning, it would take more than engines to get that train out of the yard until we had finished. '*Harosho*—all right' we said to the station master. 'You send to Nikolsk for your engine; we will clean the

train, and we will keep on cleaning until the very moment that the engine starts to pull out.'

"After these interruptions we went ahead full steam. The train people were now up and about. We laid out the plan of getting hot and cold water, cleaning the cars, reclothing the patients and preparing the train for exit from Razdolnoe. We hunted for more than an hour in the station and vicinity for various facilities, and took an hour longer to get the various squads of men—pitiful, small squads they were, too—organized and instructed in what they were to do when the cleaning should commence. We hunted the nearby village for a *banya*, or bathhouse, found a very good one—with the single exception that the stove was hopelessly out of repair. You can't bathe heavy typhus cases in cold water. We abandoned the *banya* idea after one cleansing—and decided to build a *banya* of our own. We cut the train in two, ran the cars ten feet apart—thus giving us two sides for our bath house—and the other two sides could be made out of sheets stretched from poles. We went to that with a special gang told off to put it up.

"At the station there was a very limited amount of hot water—we needed an unlimited amount. We descended on three or four sleepy, indifferent Chinamen in charge of the *kub* at the *lafka*, or little store, operated by the railroad. In the compartment where hot water is kept always on tap for railroad passengers who drop off here to refill their tea kettles or samovars we found two great *kubui*, or caldrons, but only one of them contained water, and that was lukewarm. After a brief but bitter fight we menaced our Chinese friends into firing up the other boiler and doubling the amount of hot water. This would require another hour.

"We built the bath of poles and sheeting, commandeered lumber and floored a wide space, got galvanized iron garbage-cans from our train and pails from our own stock, borrowed all the pails on the typhus train, organized a hot-water gang, and the station master called out one of his force to give us water from the big hose which feeds the engines as they come panting in.

"We had to carry hot water about 100 yards. We called on the doctor of the train for all the men workers available. He had twenty able to get about, half of them badly. We took the ablest ten. We put four and then six to carrying water. We borrowed from the station-master two big sheet-

iron tanks holding about 150 gallons each. One we stood under the stand-pipe and engine-hose. The other we rolled out and set up in our improvised bath house, now rapidly taking shape. We got a big but battered and filthy porcelain tub from the typhus train and three smaller tin tubs.

"We put water into and fires under our own big garbage-cans. This was for boiling water to sterilize clothes. We sent to our car for eight stretchers to carry to the bath those unable to walk, or so weak that the walk might hurt them. We organized first three and then five stretcher gangs.

"One of us took charge in getting the patients out of the cars to the baths and back to the cars; one took charge of checking out from our cars supplies of blankets and underwear, checking off the patients and seeing that they were properly clothed; one took charge of keeping the *sanitars* on the move with their burdens of sick men. As a matter of fact, we all during the next few hours did anything and everything from scrubbing the men in the baths to scrubbing out the cars, and from carrying bales of hay to giving cool drinking water to the thirsty men.

"Sent to the car for 100 suits of underwear, 100 bath-towels. Rigged up a clothes-line. Organized some of the typhus train minor officials to check into bundles the old and lousy clothes worn by the patients, and ordered them to throw it all into an empty box-car of the train.

"Two nurses from the train, one a mere slip of a girl, and the wife of the chief doctor, also a young girl, were the first bathing squad. We impressed into service not only nearly all the *sanitars*, but even some of the stronger patients. One or two men from the station lent valuable aid, and the big *natchalnik stancia*, or station master, was running his hot-water boilers under forced pressure and helping in many ways.

## VI.

"By a quarter to 11 we were ready to receive the first patients. Called first for the stretcher cases. The sun was now bright and warm and I wished to bathe them at once and get them comfortably settled. The stretcher line began to form. The water carriers were already bringing their pails-ful, the tubs and underclothes and towels were in place, so in ten minutes we organized the cleaning of the cars—

which proved to be one real job. The idea was to take out the men, take out their filthy bedding, straw and various belongings, all infected and nasty, clean the cars with hot water, dry them, re-erect clean bunks, throw in fresh hay, throw in a blanket for each man, and then bring back the men clean and cleanly-clothed, from their bath.

"This plan we followed all day, with some variations. There was a short wait while we got fresh hay to put in the cars. We bought it at roubles 7.50 per bale from the 34th Russian Regiment, stationed in the town of Razdolnoe two miles away, and had it rushed to the station in peasant carts.

"There were a few other things to do before we were all ready to 'shoot the six.' There was some trouble making the whole scheme understood to the Russians, especially the *sanitars*, weak and stupid from sickness, but at 11.15 o'clock they brought the first patient to the bath and then began a stream of men, to and fro, dirty and clean, that did not end until sunset.

"Not until this stream began to come from the cars, not until we started down the line of cars to see that the men were brought out promptly, did we realize the full horror of this train of torture. We had literally not had time before to look closely at the train. And typhus is by now an old story. But not all last winter, not even in that damnable prison-camp at Omsk did I see such a combination of disease, filth and sheer starvation as this train gave.

"There stood the string of box-cars, two hundred or two hundred and fifty yards long. Every car except those occupied by the train personnel reeked with nameless and menacing filth, swarmed with lice, stank of mortal illness, human decay and horrible death.

"We had every car flung open, the doors slid back on their runways. Many had been partially closed, their interiors dim and shadowy. Now the full light of a bright day streamed in. Only one car we did not open. In that there lay five dead men—the fruit of yesterday.

"From the other cars trickled the living, dying stream of humanity. Some were carried, others crept out. And they headed toward the break in the string of cars, where white sheets enclosed a space four yards square and in that space there was warm, clean water, and kindly hands to bathe them.

"Yes, one sees in Siberia some horrible sights, but none

more horrible than those sights when the men were stripped of their rags for the bath. Human skeletons they were, men six feet and more weighing not over sixty pounds, arms and legs thin as reeds, and as fragile and bloodless; with faces drawn until they looked like grinning skulls, and eyes rolling dully in cavernous sockets. Mouths opened as vacuously as the mouths of idiots, and indeed, some of them were imbeciles from suffering and lack of nourishment. And others were delirious from fever.

"The filth of them was indescribable, unbelievable. They were caked with it, clothed with it. Some plastered as with mud, others mottled in strange and grotesque patterns—the patterns of boards on which they had lain. And over many of them swarmed lice so thick that the mass was as a coating of solid gray, each patch of this slow-moving coating large as the hand of a man. I know this is incredible, but the incredible is true. It is not pleasant to tell about, but it is true, and the truth of such things should be known.

"The train was giving up its passengers now, and no grave, no sepulchre, no catacomb giving up its dead could have vomited forth a more repulsive brood. They were the ghosts of all suffering and perished men struggling invincibly toward a fountain of life. Invincibly, yes, but oh, so slowly, so feebly, so wanderingly! One would have thought they came not from conscious wish but from some strange propulsion outside the realm of feeling, drifting toward the cleansing water from up and down the line of opened cars.

"Before we had the first man bathed—it was a twenty-five-minute job, for he was near to death and had to be carried almost the length of the train—these animated corpses in their scarecrow rags were clustering all about the bath house. Many, too weak to talk, lay or sat on the ground. Ringed about the bath station were these wan, pallid, skull-faced creatures, and as they sat or lay or stood, there was an incessant scratching horrible to see. Thin, bony hands steadily scratching the heads covered with long, unkempt, locks; thin, bony hands searching out the seams of their maculate clothing; thin, bony hands moving up arm or leg. The automatic lifelessness of this incessant clawing and the feeble, groping way in which these creatures of woe touched their itching limbs and bodies were terrible to behold.

## VII.

"Well, we washed every man of them. Even the crew of *sanitars*, after an hour or two, seemed to grasp all at once why we were driving them so hard, and from then on, in spite of their physical weakness and growing fatigue, they worked faster and harder.

"There were, of course, upsets; things went wrong. First the bathing got ahead of the car-cleaning, and we had a long row of stretchers with washed and fresh-clothed men, waiting for cars into which they might go. We were at that time cleaning cars by hand. The station master then found what we had wanted for an hour—a spare engine. We ran this on an adjacent track, stretched a hose, and the engine started a flood of scalding water into the mess of *débris* and filth and vermin on floors, bunks and walls. I saw the flood start and felt tremendous relief. And—a half minute later the hose burst—it was old and rotten. It could not stand the pressure.

"So I took *sanitars* off other things and put them to work on this of getting the cars ready for the newly-bathed men. The hose was patched; it broke again, was patched and broke, and from then on for an hour, this wearisome discouragement kept up. But somehow the car-cleaning progressed.

"Presently we had washed all the heavy fever cases, and began to get men back into the cars. The work went faster and faster. The *natchalnik* kept the hot water going in magnificent shape.

"We ran, too, an impromptu barber shop. Somebody found an old pair of hair-clippers. A godsend. We appointed a man to do nothing but clip hair, and made him clip it into a box, to be burned. The heads he clipped were as horrible as the faces of dying men.

"I am sorry that our bathing and tonsorial station were seen by so few. It was, I think, a sight worth seeing. We were now running them through on an average of a bath every three minutes, and later we cut this to two minutes. Even with scrubbing brushes (made on the spot out of shavings) with soap strong enough to peel the bark off a tree, with hot water and with plenty of capable hands wielding all vigorously, a really dirty man cannot be bathed under two minutes—that is, as dirty as were these men. At least

one minute was needed for the water to soak into thir caked covering of dirt and filth.

"But slowly and surely the job proceeded. The clippers broke, but they were patched up. We got another engine for an hour, and cleaned a lot of cars in that hour. We had trouble in keeping the clean and dirty men apart, so we established a 'clean zone' and 'rode range' around it. We talked and shouted and gesticulated and threatened and cajoled and persuaded; we walked and ran and carried and threw; and the plant was turning out results by mid-afternoon gratifying to see.

"Right here a word about the helpers. They worked better and better as the day wore on; of all of them, none better than the women—none so good. Cheerful, willing, skilful, tender, strong (or nerved up beyond their ordinary strength) they labored without rest for food or drink. Three women from the train itself were first at the bath station—two nurses and the wife of the doctor. The other two nurses were desperately ill in a sick car.

"They lifted the weaker patients with admirably capable strength, and placed them in the bath-tubs with tender care, soothing those who were delirious and persuading them to rest easily while the healing water was laved over their shrunken frames.

"The engine came down the line from Spasskoe to Niskolsk to take us on to Spasskoe, but we couldn't stop now. We held the engine by one means and another and set it to work cleaning cars, and we telegraphed to Vladivostok for lime and other disinfectants to be forwarded to Spasskoe, for I already began to foresee difficulties at that point.

"We held the engine and we washed every man. We also washed five extremely lousy, dirty *sanitars*—hadn't time for the others. We dealt out clean underclothes and blankets and soon most of the men were back in clean cars, on clean hay, in clean clothes, under clean blankets. We had a constant task to keep them there—many began at once to feel quite frisky and wanted to walk around. But that was but one of a million or so little jobs that we were trying to keep going as part of the big job.

"From this on the thing was easy—except for the manual labor, and the miles of walking up and down the yard. The machine worked rapidly and well.

"It was sunset when the last man was bathed. In the

next hour we cleaned the yard—ran the train to another track, got all the men with spades, pieces of board, anything available; covered refuse, burned dirty straw, rags, much old clothing, put all the property back on various cars, put the stretchers in a special box-car—and then I made a last round, dealing out blankets to any who had been missed.

“ . . . It did my heart good to see my soldiers clean and comfortable in their new beds, the cars clean and neat, the atmosphere for the first time around the train clean and bearable!

### VIII.

“ We had cleaned up the train, the patients, the yard. It was dusk. And our work was done. No, not quite all. The engine hooked to the train and cut out one car. It was a closed box-car. A squad of men piled on the engine and it puffed away, vanishing into the deep violet hues of a valley that lay to the northwest. Presently we heard, miles across the gentle hills, the long wail of its whistle.

“ In the closed car were eight men, and they had just been buried on the hills. Five had died yesterday, three to-day. The burying-gang dug the grave this afternoon—I use the singular advisedly,—and in this one great grave went four coffins and four bodies. There had been time only for four coffins.

“ The engine came back, hooked to the train, and we made ready to proceed. The last act of our day of cleansing had ended.

“ We were ready for supper in the big cook car of our pair. An honored guest was the stalwart *natchalnik stancia*. We all feasted on our modest fare, considerably more modest since we had split up with the typhus train—and talked the day over and decided that at any rate we were making progress.

“ At 8 o'clock we are pulling out for Nikolsk and Spasskoe. We are ready for Spasskoe now. The train is not absolutely cleaned. It is not absolutely free of flies and lice, but it is cleaner than most trains on the Trans-Siberian route, including a lot of the so-called first-class passenger trains—and so are its passengers—and we can go into Spasskoe yard, not as a plague train, but as a sanitary train bringing in soldiers from the front, not neglected and loathsome creatures in all stages of dissolution, but soldiers from the front who have been cared for.”



## IX.

The typhus train was in at Spasskoe the next morning. The Red Cross men found the Spasskoe military hospital packed on a train ready to go west. Orders had come reversing the instructions to go west, but still the beds, bedding, medicines and other supplies stood on the train in the yards a half mile from the hospital.

The full hospital equipment and supplies for 150 men were replaced in the hospital building that afternoon, Sunday. At 7 the following morning the soldiers were taken from the typhus train and sent to the hospital. Some were carried in stretchers, some in peasant carts, some were able to walk supported by *sanitars*, others—and there was a surprising number of these—were able to walk by themselves. Good food and clean surroundings for two days had worked a healing miracle. Men carried to the baths in stretchers now were able to stand upright.

At 11 o'clock that Monday morning all the patients were at the hospital. Those most ill were already in their comfortable beds. Nearly 100, now visibly on the mend, were sitting on the grass under the bright sunshine, and waiting while those more unfortunate were first attended to.

And then the Red Cross men waved good-bye to their soldier charges of three days, and ran for the down-passenger train just pulling into the station, to which the Red Cross cars had been attached.

They reached the station in time, and, as the closing act of a few busy days, they ordered the typhus train to be sent to a distant siding and again disinfected.

None of the soldiers had died since the bathing. Forty-eight hours passed without a death as against an average of five a day for some time previous.

And with this in mind the Red Cross men swung aboard their cars as the train pulled out, and called it a day's work.

RILEY ALLEN.